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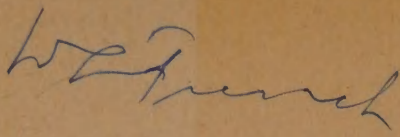

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THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND ETERNAL LIFE

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THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND ETERNAL LIFE

BY

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THE INGERSOLL LECTURESHIP

Extract from the will of Miss Caroline Haskell Ingersoll, who died in Keene, County of Cheshire, New Hampshire, Jan. 26, 1893

First. In carrying out the wishes of my late beloved father, George Goldthwait Ingersoll, as declared by him in his last will and testament, I give and bequeath to Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass., where my late father was graduated, and which he always held in love and honor, the sum of Five thousand dollars ($5,000) as a fund for the establishment of a Lectureship on a plan somewhat similar to that of the Dudleian lecture, that is — one lecture to be delivered each year, on any convenient day between the last day of May and the first day of December, on this subject, "the Immortality of Man," said lecture not to form a part of the usual college course, nor to be delivered by any Professor or Tutor as part of his usual routine of instruction, though any such Professor or Tutor may be appointed to such service. The choice of said lecturer is not to be limited to any one religious denomination, nor to any one profession, but may be that of either clergyman or layman, the appointment to take place at least six months before the delivery of said lecture. . . . The same lecture to be named and known as "the Ingersoll lecture on the Immortality of Man."

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ARGUMENT

CONTRAST between the outlook of Cicero and of St. Paul upon a future life.

The inheritance of Jesus through beliefs current in Palestine in his own time. The Greek influence and the development of the Hebrew eschatology. The evolution of Pharisaism.

Jesus sanctioned the main features of the Pharisaic tradition, while agreeing with the Sadducees that resurrection is not resuscitation.

He strengthened this faith by his own teaching as to (*a*) the fidelity of God to those loyal to Him, (*b*) God as the Heavenly Father, (*c*) the Kingdom of God.

The conception of "eternal life," involved in these considerations throws its own light upon this faith.

The resurrection of Jesus. The historical evidence and the mystic experience.

The Christian faith as to eternal life a conviction woven of many strands.

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND ETERNAL LIFE

A COLLECTION of letters of condolence, gathered from many lands and periods, would open a penetrating glimpse into various conceptions of the future life. In such an anthology a high place would be given to two letters preserved to us from the days of the earliest Cæsars. We have in full the correspondence between Sulpicius Severus and Cicero, on the occasion of the death of Tullia, the greatly beloved daughter of the Roman orator. The best that Severus can say to his friend is that he sympathizes with him in his heavy bereavement, but that Cicero must remember that his daughter had only experienced the common lot, and that she had lived as long as life was of

value to her; that she had passed away only together with her country's freedom; that she had lived to see her father elected Prætor, Consul, Augur, and that, after enjoying well-nigh every blessing that life can offer, she left it only when the Republic itself was falling.

The reply of Cicero reveals how much his daughter was to him, and enlarges upon the fact that he cannot find the consolation that was given to Fabricius Maximus, or Lucius Paulus, or Marcus Cato, who lived in times when their individual affliction was capable of finding a solace in the distinctions they earned for their country. The greater part of the letter is simply an unavailing regret for the loss of a beloved companionship.

There is extant another letter, dating from the same century, in which is revealed an entirely different outlook on the future. The author is writing to a group that had been cast down by the

grievous loss of dear friends, and these are his consoling words: "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him." (1 Thess. 4: 13, 14.)

In these letters of world-famous men, representing the highest culture of their respective civilizations, we have thrown into salient relief the new conception of the future life that was introduced by the Christian faith. Of course Cicero was not unmindful of the arguments of Plato, or of his own speculations, but when it came to the test he gained no consolation from them. He did not rise even to the height of Tacitus, who in closing his eulogy of Agricola, his beloved father-in-law, wrote: "If there be any habitation for the shades of the vir-

tuous; if, as philosophers suppose, exalted souls do not perish with the body; may you rest in peace!"

The thought of St. Paul moves in a wholly different realm. He has reached a summit from which he gains a wider horizon and a clearer view. The speculations and surmises of Cicero failed him when put to the test. The convictions of St. Paul not only afforded a ground of comfort to others, but proved to be the stay of his spirit in the sharpest crises.

If we may regard the words I have quoted from St. Paul as a summary of the Christian faith about the future, our task is to refresh our minds with some of the considerations that made for their great confidence.

Since this faith is largely due to the teachings and work of Jesus we naturally ask, *What was his inheritance as to this great matter through the current beliefs in which he was brought up in Palestine?*

For centuries it had been impossible for the Jews to resist Greco-Roman influences, and religious views were inevitably colored by them. The Hellenic conception of the future life had undergone a long evolution from the time when the Homeric account of the interview of Ulysses with Achilles among the pale Shades of Elysium (Odyssey, XI, 466) represented the popular thought.

This notion of the future, however, was prevalent even in Rome just before our era. There are many traces of it in Horace; and Tibullus, who was a boy of eleven when Cicero died, wrote: "There are no fields of harvests below, no cultivated vineyards, but fierce Cerberus and the Stygian ferry-boat. There a pale crowd with fleshless cheeks wanders by the gloomy marsh." (I, 35–38.)

Ideas about the future life, of course, were profoundly influenced by that marvelous "dead lift" that came to the

Greek mind in the century previous to 650 B.C. The most significant change is traced to the Orphic cult. The essential teaching appears to have been that the initiate would share the life of the god with whom he had been identified by the ritual observances. At first, there is no hint that they had any moral aspect. The experience of initiation was thought of as bringing to the participant an emancipation from the shackles of the body. But gradually a higher conception of the nature of God — the product of philosophical reflection and mystic experience — moralized these rites. To some they became a means for securing salvation by outward acts: to others they provided strong motives for morality. But whatever the theory, the future life came to be conceived as profoundly affected by the moral experience of the individual in the present world.

Greek thought, however, could never

give a decisive answer to the question: What is it that we suppose to be immortal? What constituent of man, as we know him now, survives? But throughout the world touched by Greek civilization there was a prevailing conviction that something in the individual man was inherently immortal.

The development of the Hebrew eschatology was largely controlled by the superior corporate consciousness of the Semitic races. The value of the individual was determined not so much by his personal worth as by his relationship to the tribe or the nation. Throughout the older Hebrew literature we find that almost nothing is said about personal survival after death, and the few references that we have imply the existence of a vague shadowy realm beyond the government and control of Yahweh. The Hebrew psychology appears to have been that man was composed of *Basar* (flesh)

and *Ruach* (wind, breath, *spirit*) and *Nephesh* (soul) — the animated result of personality. Death is the dissolution of union between *Basar*-flesh and *Ruach*-spirit. *Nephesh*, the result of the union, ceased to exist. But along with this sharply cut psychology there emerge in the Psalms, and Job, and Isaiah, allusions implying a shadowy personal existence in the future life, which is sometimes called *Nephesh* by the later writers. (Psalm 39: 13; Job, 3: 13–19; Isaiah, 14: 3–11; Ezekiel, 33: 5.) Death did blot out existence, but what survived was a pale shadow of life here. As a whole, we may say with confidence that, while the Old Testament contains some implications about the future, as for example in those mountain peaks of spiritual aspiration and insight, the 16th, the 49th, and the 73d Psalms, to which many critics would assign a late date, it contains no clear revelation

respecting it. The Old Testament saint was content to survive in his children, and rewards and penalties were limited to this world.

The heart of the Old Testament teaching is that Yahweh holds a covenant relation to the children of Abraham, and that if Israel, on its part, fulfills the conditions of the covenant, which are primarily ethical, it will be well with the nation. One of the outstanding problems of Old Testament interpretation is involved in the undoubted fact that the Israelites were so slightly influenced by the ideas of Egypt about the survival of the individual. It does not make much difference whether we take the traditional or the modern construction of the history. On any theory the Hebrews were in close contact with Egypt. The difficulty of the problem is increased by the fact that many of the inculcations of the law, no matter what the date to

which it is assigned, would be reinforced by a clear statement as to the future life. But if the Mosaic law did not give the Hebrews the teaching about this that we might naturally look for, it gave them something much finer and better — the truth of this covenant relation of Jehovah with them.

That is really the essential thing in the teaching and the heart of the religion of Israel — that Yahweh pledges himself to Israel if the people will keep his commandments. Even the Ten Commandments do not stand in the Book of Exodus as bare commands. The Prelude, "I am Jehovah, thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," is as vital as the explicit commands. The statement of what Yahweh expects of Israel is grounded on the fact of what he has done and can do for Israel. It was not a mere formality that the people were led

so often to reaffirm their loyalty to their agreements with Yahweh. This peculiar relationship of Yahweh with Israel is regarded as so intimate, that in the Book of Hosea it is compared with the relationship between husband and wife or between father and son. Each shares the lot of the other, and Yahweh is represented as in the position of a husband whose wife has been untrue to him. The loyal wife would inevitably share all the privilege and glory of her husband.

No matter what our construction of the history, we cannot fail to see that two great convictions were burned into the consciousness of the Hebrew people: that Yahweh — the one God — was a God of righteousness, and that he loved and cared for his people.

The tremendous experience of the exile expanded Hebrew ideas in many directions, but in none more markedly than in emphasizing the worth of the in-

dividual. The nation had failed in responding to the moral demands of Jehovah. The convenant of Sinai had not been observed by the nation. Did that mean that every Hebrew was outside the demands and love of God? Had Yahweh thrown into a spiritual exile every member of the chosen people? Jeremiah, at least, could not believe it, and in the teaching of a new covenant (31: 31–34), which is attributed to him, he emphasized the worth and responsibility of the individual, and, by implication, the rewards and penalties that would come to him. The prophet Ezekiel seems to have taught this, but he failed to rise to the level of its great suggestion. Apparently he reached the conclusion that men receive their full deserts in this life. To reflecting minds this doctrine has always been untenable, and the revolt from it produced two theological parties which still exist. On

the one hand, the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes was logical enough in holding that such a theory obliterates the moral aspects of human experience (Eccl. 3: 9 *sq.*). On the other hand, the whole outlook upon the future was profoundly changed by the conception that the power and rule of Yahweh extended to Sheol. This moralized the entire conception of the future life.

This development finds memorable expression in the drama of Job. The problem of national survival is not considered at all. The welfare of the individual is the sole interest. If Yahweh is righteous, it is inconceivable that the injustices and hideous inequalities of this life should not be redressed in the future. The celebrated passage beginning "I know that my Redeemer liveth," is susceptible of various interpretations, but the outlook of the writer upon the future life is not dependent on the rendering of this para-

graph. The heart of Job's aspiration is that he may find God, and he is satisfied that, if he can come into immediate relationship with Him, the dreadful antinomy between the righteous life and suffering will be dispelled. The problem, as a matter of fact, was not solved. Perhaps the data are not within the range of our faculties. The real climax of the book is the inculcation that the highest wisdom is confidence in the righteousness of Yahweh in all realms. From this springs the conviction that in the rule of God the interests of the individual are safeguarded, and that the relationship of the righteous man to God is so inexpressibly deep and intimate that it may be enduring.

Recent investigations of the period between the traditional close of the Old Testament canon and the times of Jesus have confirmed what we might have anticipated. The development of Hebrew

thought about immortality in this period was determined by four speculations: the Greek conception that some element in the constitution of man has the inherent capacity of surviving death; the tradition of a corporate continuance of life for Israel; the penetrating insight of Jeremiah as to the worth of the individual; and vague but strong influences from Persia. The idea of the Messianic Kingdom, in which the chosen people would realize immortality, was far from being lost; but the conviction that the individual would survive death was widely held, and resurrection was thought of as resuscitation at "the Day of the Lord," the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom.

Many passages in the Apocrypha and the Apocalyptic literature strikingly confirm this, and the doctrine received classic form in the great declaration of the Book of Daniel: "And many of them

that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (12:2, 3.) Undoubtedly this first applied to the martyrs and to the apostates, but it was easily expanded to embrace the righteous and the wicked generally.

The conviction expressed in this momentous declaration was an almost inevitable implication of ethical monotheism, and in its essential features it remains so to-day.

The idea that God is righteous and loving precludes the idea that this world is the only arena in which He reveals these qualities in the experience of the individual. Plato did not have the Christian conception of the future life, but he felt profoundly the moral rela-

tionship of the present to some future experience.

He represents Socrates as saying: "If death were only the end of all, the wicked would have had a good bargain in dying, for they would have been happily quit not only of their body but of their own evil together with their souls" (*Phædo*, p. 371: Fowler). And in the same dialogue, reflecting a strain of thought that also appears in the *Gorgias*, in the myth of the judgment after death, and in the *Republic*, in the Story of Er, Socrates says to Simmias: "Let a man be of good cheer who has arranged his soul in her own proper jewels, temperance, and justice, and courage, and nobility, and truth; thus adorned, she is ready to go on her journey to the world below when her time comes." Ethical monotheism involved like convictions in Jerusalem and in Athens.

Students of religion are surprised that the clearest declaration in Hebrew literature of the Resurrection connected with a moral judgment occurs in the Book of Daniel. That book represents the religious reaction upon Judaism of the tremendous Maccabean struggle. It is a book of heroisms. It represents in vivid examples the choices of men to whom moral interests were of transcendent worth. They did not count their lives dear to them when weighed against devotion to the law of Yahweh. The story of these loyal spirits begets the conviction that they are of worth to God; and instead of suffering them to slip into darkness or extinction, God will make them partakers of his own life and they will "shine as the stars for ever and ever."

Throughout this literature the destiny of evil men is the dark background of the future of loyal spirits. Retribution in

the world to come is the obverse side of the shield.

The circumstance that this persuasion regarding the future life was attained so slowly indicates that it had been reached by a long process of moral development. It was not a dogma embodied in an external, verbal revelation; it was a conviction won by a vigorous attempt to solve the problem of existence by an interpretation of spiritual experience. The result was a direct, but almost unintelligible sense of communion with God. A belief in immortality rested upon faith considered as commitment to a moral inference.

At the time of Jesus the Pharisees were the heirs of this great spiritual evolution, tracing from the prophets of the Exile; while the Sadducees represented the preëxilic tradition.

The question now arises: *What was the attitude of Jesus toward this inheritance?*

The report of the conversation of Jesus with the Sadducees (Matthew, 22: 23–33; Mark, 12: 18–27; Luke, 20: 27–40) throws a clear light upon this problem. In it Jesus stamped the Pharisaic tradition with his sanction as against the Sadducees. He approved the main features of that long spiritual development which looked toward a future existence of rewards and penalties. At the same time he gave the belief about the future a new content and established it on a firmer basis.

Matthew represents Jesus as saying that "In the resurrection people neither marry nor are married, but are as angels in heaven." (Matthew, 22: 30.) In the Lukan account we read: "The sons of this world marry and are given in marriage, but they that are accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage: for

neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels: and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." (Luke, 20: 34–36.) Here we have a clear affirmation that the future life is not simply a prolongation of existence in the present world, but a transformation of all that constitutes the individual, to correspond to new conditions.

Jesus seems to have agreed with the Sadducees that a future life, thought of as resumption of life here on the earth, is an impossibility. Resurrection is not, as the Pharisees held, resuscitation: it is metamorphosis. It is not reanimation but entrance into a new order of life. We owe to St. Paul the development of this hint of Jesus into the doctrine of "the spiritual body," which is not one made out of spirit, but an organism perfectly responsive to the needs of the personality in a new environment.

But in this conversation Jesus did

much more than modify the current conception of the future life: *he deepened and broadened the reasons for believing in such a life.* Mark reports him as saying: "But as touching the dead that they are raised; have ye not read in the book of Moses, in the place concerning the Bush, how God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Mark, 12: 26, 27.) Luke adds, "for all live unto him." (Luke, 20: 38.)

Whatever difficulties may occur in the logical construction of this argument, — and that there are such, few would deny, — the main contention is indisputable, namely, that in God's recognition of his relationship to the worshiper, and in the man's recognition of his relationship to his God, there is involved a mutual obligation. Jesus says that God will be faithful to all that is involved in

this tie, and that fidelity on the part of the living God means the continued life of those who have truly worshiped Him. Death may dissolve the relationship of men to the world, but not the tie between man and God. The loyal man will share the life of the living God whom he has served.

The thought is the same as in that surpassingly beautiful 16th Psalm:

I say unto Yahweh, Thou art my Lord
Welfare have I none without thee. . . .
I have set Yahweh before me continually;
For he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
Therefore my heart is glad and my glory exults,
My flesh also will dwell in safety.
For thou wilt not give up my soul to Hades
Neither wilt thou suffer thy loving one to see the pit;
Thou wilt make known to me the path of life;
In thy presence is fulness of joys,
All pleasant things are in thy right hand forever.

(*Cheyne.*)

The same thought reappears in the letter to the Hebrews, where the writer, speaking of those who sacrificed much for their faith in God, declares: "Wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." (Hebrews, 11: 16.)

And the Scriptures have a sufficient answer to the objection that man is too insignificant for such a high destiny — that God would sufficiently fulfill the obligation involved in the tie between Him and His loyal worshiper by some blessing far short of this.

The "Institutes" of Calvin have overshadowed his other theological work, apart from his commentaries, but in his first theological treatise — the tract, "Psychopannychia" (1535), which was written against the doctrine of the sleep of the dead — he bases his argument on the claim that conscious existence is so precious to God that he will not suffer it

to be obliterated in the period between death and the judgment. In this argument Calvin was true to the insight of Jesus as to the worth of conscious free personalities to the living God. The whole world will not balance against the soul. The life of man is the highest expression of the life of God. The vast risks involved in endowing men with freedom are justified by the infinite worth of a human personality winning its way through moral conflict to the divine ideal.

There are foregleams of this great assertion in the Old Testament. For example, the 8th Psalm is quoted in the New Testament more frequently than any other passage in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is a hymn of praise to the glory of God as seen in man. Man is greater than sun or moon or stars because God is mindful of him and visits him. The perfect praise does not come from the or-

dered majesty of the heavenly host, but from the response of a living, human spirit, even that of a babe, to the living God. We need never fear that the insignificance of man will lead God, in the fulfilment of the obligation involved in the tie which He recognizes when He says "I am thy God," to give man any but the largest blessing in His power.

Still further, Jesus confirms faith in the essential features of the great Pharisaic tradition *by declaring not only that God is to be trusted as "the faithful Creator," but that He is the Heavenly Father.*

One of the most sweeping generalizations of modern science declares the identity of materials and forces in the entire universe. Fire burns in your grate by the same law according to which it flames in the sun. Iron and chlorine are the same here as in the remotest fixed star. The heavenly bodies are regulated in their steady courses by forces kindred

to those which control a boy's whirling sling. With profound insight Jesus announced this principle in the personal realm. The divine forgiveness is like human forgiveness, and we are to pray that God will forgive us as we forgive one another. God regards those who have wandered from his ways as a woman looks upon a coin she has lost, as a shepherd looks upon a sheep that has strayed from the flock, as a wise and loving father looks upon a wayward son. He deals with men as a good father treats his children. If they ask for a fish he does not give them a serpent, or for an egg a scorpion. The realm of personalities is a cosmos as well as the physical universe.

Such a revelation abundantly warrants large inferences as to the way the heavenly Father will deal with men. We have in our best normal human instincts and promptings the base line of vast triangulations. St. Paul, thoroughly re-

sponsive to this insight of Jesus, declares that the family itself, with its endearing relations of parents and children, is not an original, but a copy, not the reality, but a type. Human fatherhood is a reflection of the divine. He writes: "I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named." (Eph., 3: 14, 15.)

We may trust without limit the inferences drawn from the wholesome human affections. The instincts of fatherhood interpret God. The individual man is precious to God as our own children are precious to us. What we will do for our children is only a parable of what God will do for us. This disclosure of the preciousness of the individual man to God is the heart of the Christian Gospel. To those who accept the historic Christian view of the death of Jesus as the crowning revelation of the

divine love, the conviction as to immortality, construed not merely as existence but as fullness of life in which the divine ideal for man is completely realized, is lifted to the realm of the moral certainties. We appreciate anew the question of St. Paul, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not also with him freely give us all things?" (Rom., 8: 32.)

In view of such a disclosure of the heart of God the words of Jesus do not sound strangely. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them unto me, is greater than all, and no man is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one." (John, 10: 27–30.)

And more even than this, *Jesus' con-*

ception of the Kingdom of God made for the same inspiring confidence. The expectation of a corporate continuance of existence for Israel has its origin in the oldest strata of Hebrew thought. A large volume would be required to trace the development and modifications of this ideal through the centuries. The transfer of the religious unit from the nation to the individual did not eliminate the racial ideal. Both conceptions were harmonized in the Pharisaic doctrine of the resurrection in which the righteous dead are restored to life to share in the glory of the Kingdom.

No phrase was more frequently on the lips of Jesus than "the Kingdom of Heaven." The Sermon on the Mount and the Parables outline its nature, the conditions of membership in it, and its privileges. As Jesus used the phrase, the old Messianic hope had a new significance. Under his touch it became not

racial but human. Broadly speaking his thought was that of "the divine community in which the will of God will be perfectly realized." The intimate relation of the individual soul to God does not represent complete blessedness. The fatherhood of God cannot come to self-realization except in a family, and the relations of the members of the family to one another condition their blessedness and the fulfillment of the divine purpose. The two great commandments hang together.

The vision of Jesus is not simply that of isolated men brought into fellowship with God, but of a society of sons and daughters who in relation to God and to one another realize the divine ideal in the creation of the race.

It is inconceivable that this community of sons should be simply like the river that exists only in the constant replenishment of the drops of water that

compose its flowing stream. These personalities that make up the Kingdom share in its permanence. They are "living stones" in an eternal temple. They have not been brought into fellowship with God through temptation and struggle and pain and sacrifice, and into this fine and high relationship with one another, in order that they make their contribution to the existence of the Kingdom and then drop out of conscious being. They partake of the perpetuity of the Kingdom itself.

It must be so; for if those whose lives have made actual the divine community perish, then the best results of their achievement are lost, for the high values which they have won in their own experience of living can be realized only in their own living personalities. An immortality of influence is not to be disparaged, but, if those who contribute to such an heritage do not survive the ex-

perience of death, the noblest outcome of their lives has perished. The heirs of a fortune may enter into an inheritance; but the reaction upon the character of the one who by his industry, enterprise, and facing of difficulties gained the wealth, cannot be transmitted to others. The development and enrichment of personality is the consummate result of noble living, and if the living man ceases to exist, that is lost forever. The choicest values persist only in the lives of those who won them; they cannot be transmitted. The festival of All Saints is one of the most inspiring observances in the Christian calendar.

Such considerations lead us to a fresh appreciation of the prophetic forecast of the Kingdom that is everlasting and endureth to all generations. We have the confidence that membership in the Kingdom is an assurance of the immortal life. In this aspect of our relationships

the great words of the author of the Letter to the Hebrews — who identifies the future of all faithful souls with that of the heroes of faith — appeal to us with a fine significance. "And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect." (Heb., 11: 39, 40.) And again: "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven." (Heb., 12: 22, 23.)

Let us now glance for a moment, *at the conception of "eternal life" implied by the considerations we have been reviewing.* Some strain, suggested by the time element in human existence as we know it now, is certainly involved, but the main

feature of the conception is derived from personal relationship, from filial confidence, from intimate fellowship construed in the deepest and most vital way. It is unnecessary to quote the familiar sentences from St. Paul and the Fourth Gospel, so dear to the Christian heart, which do not admit of any other interpretation. Existence and life are not identical. One may attain to eternal life, and the fearful alternative is "eternal destruction from the face of the Lord." (2 Thess., 1: 9.)

Jesus habitually thinks of God as the fountain of all good. That is one significance of his gnomic saying in the Lukan record of the conversation with the Sadducees: "for all live to him." Life, in all its widest meanings, depends on relationship to God. As it is said in the first letter to Timothy, God "only hath immortality." (1 Tim., 6: 16.) Jesus' own inner life, as revealed not only in his

words and acts, but in his point of view, is the perfect type of this relationship. He is sure of God. The filial tie with his Father constitutes an abiding element in his consciousness. His satisfactions are in God. He is always aware that He pleases Him. The anguish of the cross was the clouding of the Father's face. In one great word he defines "eternal life": "And this is life eternal that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." (John, 17: 3.) The astounding claim of Jesus is that he mediates this life to those who come into loyal relationship with himself. Whatever our view of the authorship, the date, or the verbal accuracy of the reports of the words of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, this claim of Jesus underlies the assumptions of St. Paul in his undisputed Epistles. It conditions his mystic phrase, "in Christ"; and the truth of eternal life

mediated by Christ is so verified in his experience that he can write "for to me to live is Christ." (Philip., 1: 21.)

The burden of the Fourth Gospel is the exposition of this mediation of eternal life through Jesus. The prologue asserts that "in him was life and the life was the light of men." (John, 1: 4.) "As the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself." (John, 5: 26.) "Ye will not come to me that ye may have life." (John, 5: 40.) "For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world." (John, 6: 33.) "I am the bread of life." (John, 6: 48.) "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." (John, 11: 25.) "Eternal Life," in the thought of Jesus, is a present experience, with vast continuances in other realms of being.

This conception of "eternal life" moves in a realm at the widest remove from the thought of a future existence which is a vague continuation of the present. It is full of the light and peace and joy of which we have only a faint analogy in the happiest experiences of the union of human hearts in a deep and loyal love.

It surprises careful students that the fate of the wicked is left in such obscurity both in the Scriptures and in the teaching of the early Christian fathers. The evidence, looked at as a whole, points to the fact that death does not terminate existence, but exactly what is indicated by the antithesis in the pivotal passage in Daniel between "everlasting life" and "shame and everlasting contempt," or in the contrast between "the resurrection of life" and "the resurrection of judgment," as given in the fifth chapter of the Fourth Gospel?

At least this is clear: the Christian Gospel puts its main emphasis upon the glory of a future life that perpetuates everything that is highest, noblest, and best in human experience here. The fellowship with Christ of which it speaks is not fellowship with "the pale Galilean" of monkish tradition; it is fellowship with everything that is beautiful and noble as typified in ideal manhood and womanhood — the radiant personality of the Son of Man. The invitation of the Gospel is to a wedding feast. Response to the Gospel awakens the joy that comes to one who finds a treasure or acquires a jewel of surpassing worth.

And "eternal death" is to miss the prize of all human experience. It is to lose blessed and fruitful relationship to God. It is to be a branch severed from the vine; to wander in a desert far from the springs of water; to be in darkness, shut out from the warmth and light of the sun.

The assertion that such a conception of "eternal life" suggests the survival of conscious personality beyond death is not nearly strong enough. The possibilities of fellowship with God are very imperfectly realized here. At best they are only an "earnest," as St. Paul calls them, of what awaits loyal spirits in another realm. The present experience is so linked to the future that it involves immortality in every noblest sense. Whether man is inherently immortal or not, life of this kind endures.

Plato felt this deeply. As we review the arguments in the *Phædo*, it dawns upon us that the motive that prompts the arguments is more significant than the reasonings, and that Socrates himself is the real argument. "I had a singular feeling," Phædo says, "at being in his company. For I could hardly believe that I was present at the death of a friend, and therefore I did not pity him,

Echecrates, his mien and language were so noble and fearless in the hour of death that to me he appeared blessed. I thought that in going to another world he could not be without a divine call, and that he would be happy, if any man ever was, when he arrived there; and therefore I did not pity him as might seem natural at such a time."

Peter, in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, says of Jesus; "Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." (Acts 2: 24.) The thought of Peter must have been like the feeling of Phædo when he recalled the last hours of Socrates: "It was not possible that he should be holden of death."

The great Pharisaic conviction as to the reality of the future life was an achievement of spiritual experience. It came from a profounder ethical concep-

tion of the character and purpose of the One God, and a new appreciation of the worth of human personality.

The correspondence of Cicero with Severus does not suggest his ultimate conviction regarding the future life. It is probable that the death of Tullia gave rise to reflections and insights that inspired more than a faint hope that the best values of life were not obliterated by death. It is not wholly without significance that, following Tullia's death, he wrote the *Treatise of Consolation*, and that all his works which lead us to believe that he had a strong hope of a future life were written in the next two years — the *De Senectute*, the *De Amicitia*, the *De Finibus*, the *Tusculan Disputations*, and *Hortensius*, to which St. Augustine paid his extravagant eulogy. It is the way in which we all walk, and an immortality that actually influences us does not rest upon a dogmatic teach-

ing that can be imposed by one man upon another. It is the resultant of instinct and experience and insight into the character of God and the worth of personality, confirmed, enlarged, and strengthened by the Master of all the problems of the Spirit.

In the writings of St. Paul, *the historical resurrection of Jesus, which must be construed not as reanimation but as entrance into a higher order of life, becomes the conclusive evidence of the future life, and the blessedness of those who have come into fellowship with God through faith in Christ.* It has been remarked that our difficulties as to the resurrection of Jesus are not those which Paul met in his proclamation of the Gospel. The "cross" was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness, while the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus did not stand in the way of the acceptance of the apostolic message by thousands of the Jews

in the very city in which Jesus had been crucified; and at Athens Paul found not so much opposition to his teaching of the resurrection as amused curiosity about it. To-day, on the contrary, the proclamation of heroic devotion to duty and of self-sacrificing love, typified by the "cross," arouses little hostility; but the proclamation of the resurrection of Jesus, which lies very near the heart of early preaching, in many circles is refined away, or violently antagonized. You may meet an argument with an argument, but you cannot meet a fact with an argument; and, if it is reasonably established that Jesus demonstrated his continued existence to the sense-experience of the disciples, our philosophies will reckon with the fact.

Something happened that convinced the disheartened disciples of Jesus that He had triumphed over the experience of death, and was not only alive, but that

they were in actual relationship with the Living Christ.

No hardship, suffering, or menace of death could weaken this conviction; and these men were not hysterical enthusiasts, willing to believe anything that coincided with their wishes. As they appear in the story of their lives previous to the great event, they were eminently practical-minded persons, inclined to the scepticism that is apt to mark those of that type.

They stand forth as men to whom "the Easter faith" in the living Christ would have been impossible without "the Easter message," that He had risen from the dead. The first preaching of the Gospel was concerning "Jesus and the resurrection," and that in Jerusalem itself.

The strength of St. Paul's convictions as to the resurrection of Jesus cannot be denied. He is the one man who has

stamped himself upon the Mediterranean world as not even the Cæsars have done. His serenity and force are evident to every reader of his letters. The slightest examination of the Apocalyptic literature, in which Paul as a Pharisee had been trained, gives us a new appreciation of his common sense and mental poise in emancipating himself from its wild imaginings. He sharply discriminated as to the place and value of visions, and coldly assessed the worth of any abnormal phase of religion.

In his first letter to the Church at Corinth he based his conviction as to the resurrection of Jesus on the sense-experience of witnesses, corroborated by his own vision. The founding of the Christian Church upon this evidence and this conviction is an historical phenomenon that remains insoluble to the most acid criticism.

Undoubtedly there are palpable difficulties in blending the first reports of the resurrection of Jesus in an harmonious narrative. The problem of the sources of the various records in our possession is still under critical investigation. The records themselves are only brief accounts from different witnesses with different experiences, but they all reflect the existence of a fact, in the realm of sense-experience, which gave rise to the stable conviction. Our documents did not create the conviction; they witness to the fact from which it sprang. We cannot verify the empty Tomb, but we may be certain of the conviction which the events of Easter morning produced.

St. Paul's persuasion as to the reality of the resurrection of Jesus was not due wholly to historical evidences: it held a genetic relation to a spiritual experience arising from fellowship with the living Christ. The wonder of the new life that

had come to him was like the wonder of the primal creation.

"Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor., 4:6.) The immediate knowledge that his own personal life had been exalted and transformed led him to identify the power that had wrought this change in his own spirit with the power that raised Jesus from the dead. "God being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, quickened us together with Christ and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph., 2:4, 5.) "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins." (1 Cor., 15:17.) But they were conscious that their faith was not vain; they had the sense of forgiveness of sin and of reconciliation with

God. These were facts of consciousness, and they bore their impressive witness to the Resurrection of Jesus.

It is easy to disparage evidence or reasoning of this sort. The mystic is always at a disadvantage when he attempts to lead others to his conclusions. The evidence which has moved him is incommunicable. It can be appreciated only by sharing his experience. And the wonderful thing about the statement that Jesus conquered death, and is now a living personality with whom men may come into relationship, is that throughout the ages the evidence for it has not been simply that of documents or tradition but the constant experience of human hearts in fellowship with the living Lord. To them the proof has been conclusive, even though by its very nature it is incommunicable to others.

To the early disciples, the resurrection of Jesus was a revelation. It was the

casting down of a barrier, the opening of a door. It was like a mighty tide breaking through the bar that separates a sluggish and foul lagoon from the ocean. The boundless sea sweeps over it with its purifying flood. In the great words of the Te Deum it "opened the kingdom of heaven." Human life became like the Jerusalem Chamber in Westminster Abbey. The habitation of man was one with the dwelling-place of the Eternal. Life here or yonder became all one. The outlook upon the future was transformed, and the dark region beyond the grave was lighted up and made supremely lovely by the marvelous disclosure. It would be good, and could be only good, to go where Jesus had gone. He had "brought life and immortality to light."

The Christian evidence for immortality is woven of many strands. It reaches back to the great instinctive per-

suasions and aspirations of the human spirit in every age and in every land. When the individual was submerged in the tribe, and the race hope did not extend beyond the perpetuity of the larger unit, while there remained a vague realm in which the human spirit might still exist, it was long before survival of the entire personality was credible. But, with the advance of ethical monotheism, it became inconceivable that the rule of a just God did not extend to the realms of the departed; and there emerged the strong conviction that there is a blessed future for loyal spirits, who share the glory of the divine fellowship. Less clearly, but unmistakably, the conviction deepened that the moral rule of God is inconsistent with the extinction of the personality of those who have done evil.

Jesus stamped with his approval these great persuasions and clarified them by his revelation of the character of God.

The burden of his teaching is the enormous loss in the world to those who choose evil, and the transcendent blessedness of those who are in filial relationship with the Father of their spirits. His own resurrection from the dead becomes the final assurance that this is the way of the universe, the plan of God.

The Christian conviction as to immortality is like the course of some great river. It is fed by unseen streams and rivulets, by melting snows and drenching rains and silent dews, by rushing torrents from the mountain passes and by calm full tributaries from the broad meadows, until it bears on its bosom the fleets of a continent. The primal instincts, profound insights of gifted spirits into the nature of God and the moral government of the world, long ponderings by men of sorrows of the heights and depths of human experience, loyal appreciations of the supreme values of

life by multitudes of patient seekers after God, the teachings of the Supreme Master of all the problems of the Spirit, and the crowning evidence of his own continued life, who mediates to men the life of God — these are the ways in which life and immortality have been brought to light.

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